

The Diamond Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra

(T235.8.748c-752c)

Translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva

Translated into English by Charles Patton

1.

Thus have I heard. One time the Buddha was staying at the Anāthapiṇḍada retreat in the Jeta Grove near Śrāvastī, with a great congregation of 1,250 monks (*bhikṣu*). At meantime, the World Honored One put on his robes and took his alms bowl into the great city of Śrāvastī to beg for alms. In the midst of that city, he begged successively and then returned to his personal dwelling to eat his meal. Having put away his robes and bowl, he washed his feet, prepared his seat, and sat.

2.

At that time, the venerable Subhūti was amidst the great congregation. He then rose from his seat, adjusted his robes, and kneeled his right knee to the ground. With his palms joined together respectfully, he addressed the Buddha, saying, "Extraordinary, World Honored One, is the Tathāgata's skillful mindfulness of the *bodhisattva*s and his skillful entrustment to the *bodhisattva*s. World Honored One, in what should good sons and good daughters engendering the supremely unexcelled *bodhicitta*¹ dwell? How should they subdue their minds?"

The Buddha replied, "Excellent, excellent! Subhūti, as you have said, the Tathāgata is skillfully mindful of the *bodhisattva*s, and skillful is his entrustment to the *bodhisattva*s. If you now listen closely, I shall explain for you in what good sons and good daughters engendering the supremely unexcelled *bodhicitta* should thus abide, and how thus they should subdue their minds."

"Yes, World Honored One. Gladly, I shall listen."

3.

The Buddha addressed Subhūti, saying, "*Bodhisattva-mahāsattva*s should thus subdue their minds: 'Where there is every single sort of sentient being; whether egg-born, womb-born, water-born, or born of transformation; whether having form or formless; whether having thought or no thought; whether neither having thought nor no thought; I will cause all to enter the non-residual Nirvāṇa, liberating them. Thus liberating the measureless, countless, and boundless sentient beings, in reality there are no sentient beings attaining that liberation.' And why? Subhūti, if a *bodhisattva* has the image of a self, the image of a person, the image of beings, or the image of a soul; then he is not a *bodhisattva*².

¹ The full Sanskrit term is *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhicitta*. *Anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi* was usually transliterated by translators of Buddhist texts when rendering it into Chinese, even though the term could have been easily translated. In the interest of making the term less cumbersome and more comprehensible, I am translating *anuttara-samyak-saṃ* ('supremely unexcelled') and leaving *bodhi* and *bodhicitta* untranslated.

² The Chinese reads *hsiang*, which means "appearance, mark, characteristic, sign". The character usually refers to the external environment, but Kumārajīva here uses it in a way that seems to refer to mental images or notions. The later translations of the Sūtra use different characters that are

4.

"Furthermore, Subhūti, a *bodhisattva* in the Dharma should not dwell in the practice of charity (*dāna*)³. I.e., he does not dwell in the forms of charity; does not dwell in the sounds, odors, tastes, tactile sensations, or ideas of charity. Subhūti, a *bodhisattva* should thus be charitable, not dwelling in such images. And why? If a *bodhisattva* does not dwell in the images of charity, his blessed virtue is incalculable.

"Subhūti, what do you think? To the East, the space can be calculated, no?"

"No, World Honored One."

"Subhūti, to the South, West, North, the four directions between, the Zenith and Nadir, the space can be calculated, no?"

"No, World Honored One."

"Subhūti, the blessed virtue of a *bodhisattva* who does not dwell in the images of charity is also so. It cannot be calculated. Subhūti, *bodhisattvas* should only dwell according to this teaching."

5.

"Subhūti, what do you think? One can see the Tathāgata by his bodily signs⁴, no?"

"No, World Honored One. One cannot see the Tathāgata by his bodily signs. And why is that? The Tathāgata has explained that the bodily signs are not bodily signs."

The Buddha addressed Subhūti, saying, "The signs ordinary people possess are signs that are all empty and mistaken. If one sees that these signs are not signs, then one sees the Tathāgata."⁵

6.

Subhūti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, isn't it doubtful that there are sentient beings who will hear thus the words spoken in this discourse and become genuinely faithful?"

The Buddha addressed Subhūti, saying, "Do not say this. In the final five hundred year era after the Tathāgata's death⁶, those who uphold the precepts and cultivate the blessed will be able to give rise to the faithful mind from these passages because they

more appropriate for internal images, notions, and views. I've translated *hsiang* as "image" in this context, but the reader should understand that it is a mental image or notion.

³ Charity is one of the six *pāramitās*, or perfections, that are cultivated by the *bodhisattvas*.

⁴ I.e., the thirty-two marks of a Buddha.

⁵ This is one of the more meaningful passages of this Sūtra, though it is not obvious. The unspoken reference here is to the essential body (*dharmakāya*) of the Buddha, which is the body devoid of characteristics that resides in ultimate reality. This passage, then, is pushing the reader towards seeing what lies beneath sensory appearances and images, rather than the surface of things.

⁶ In expressing the impermanence of the practice of the Dharma in the world, the Buddha described in other scriptures how it would progressively become superficial as the original intent of his teachings was forgotten. He broke the period of the Dharma's decay into five hundred year periods, the practice becoming more corrupted as time wore on. Once the Dharma had completely disappeared there would be a long period without it, and then a new Buddha would appear in the world to reestablish it.

are true. It should be known that these people would not have been with one Buddha, two Buddhas, three, four, or five Buddhas and sown the good roots. They will have sown the good roots with a measureless hundreds of thousands of Buddhas.⁷ Hearing these passages, even for a single recitation, they shall give rise to a pure faith. Subhūti, the Tathāgata fully knows and fully sees that these sentient beings will attain thus such measureless blessed virtue. And why? These sentient beings will not return to the images of a self, images of a person, images of sentient beings, or images of a soul. They would have no images of the Dharma and also no images of the non-Dharma. And why? If these sentient beings' minds were to grasp such images, they would become attached to a self, a person, sentient beings, and a soul. If they were to grasp the images of the Dharma, they would become attached to a self, a person, sentient beings, and a soul. And why? If they were to grasp the images of the non-Dharma, they would become attached to a self, a person, sentient beings, and a soul. This is why one should not grasp the Dharma and why one should not grasp the non-Dharma. It is because of this meaning that the Tathāgata always says, 'You monks! Know that my spoken Dharma is like the bamboo raft. The Dharma that is honored must be relinquished. How much more so is it with what is not the Dharma?'

7.

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Tathāgata has attained the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*, no? The Tathāgata has a teaching of the Dharma, no?"

Subhūti replied, "As I have understood the meaning of the Buddha's discourse, there is no certain Dharma called 'the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*'. Also, there is no certain Dharma that the Tathāgata can expound. And why? The Dharmas expounded by the Tathāgata are intangible and inexpressible. They are neither Dharmas nor non-Dharmas. And why is that? All of the Sages make discriminations from the unconditioned Dharma."⁸

8.

"Subhūti, what do you think? If a person filled the trichiliocosm⁹ with the seven treasures¹⁰ for the purpose of charity, this person's blessed virtue would become plentiful, no?"

⁷ I.e., over the course of numerous past lives as *bodhisattvas*.

⁸ This is another important passage. The unconditioned Dharma is Nirvāṇa. Thus, this passage is saying that the particular spoken doctrines expounded by the Buddhas are not absolutes, but relative expressions discriminated out of the unconditioned. The unconditioned is their source and they point those who hear them back towards the unconditioned, if followed properly.

⁹ A 'trichiliocosm' is a term coined to translate *trisahasra-mahāsahasra-lokadhātu*, which is a world system consisting of a billion worlds. This is arrived at through a complex of nested small, medium, and large world-systems. I.e., a thousand worlds make a small chiliocosm, a thousand small chiliocosms make a medium chiliocosm, and a thousand medium chiliocosms make a large chiliocosm. Thus, a large chiliocosm is 1000³ worlds. This is called a 'trichiliocosm' to remind us of the nested chiliocosms.

¹⁰ The seven treasures are: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, agate, rubies, and carnelian.

Subhūti replied, "Very plentiful, World Honored One. And why? This blessed virtue then would not be of a blessed nature. This is why the Tathāgata has said that his blessed virtue would be plentiful."

"If, again, there is a person who receives and upholds just four lines of verse that is in this Sūtra and explains it to another person, that person's blessedness would overcome the other's. And why? Subhūti, the Dharmas of all the Buddhas who have reached the Buddhas' supremely unexcelled *bodhi* are produced from this Sūtra. Subhūti, that is, those Buddhas' Dharmas, then, are not the Buddha's Dharma.

9.

"Subhūti, what do you think? The stream entrant (*ṣrota-āpanna*) is able to think, 'I have attained the stream entrant's reward', no?"

Subhūti replied, "No, World Honored One. And why? 'Stream entrant' is the name for entering the stream and for entering nowhere else: not entering forms, sounds, odors, tastes, tactile sensations, or ideas. This is called a 'stream entrant'."

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Once-returner (*sakṣdāgāmin*) is able to think, 'I have attained the Once-returner's reward', no?"

Subhūti replied, "No, World Honored One. And why? 'Once-returner' is the name for one more arrival and really is without future arrival¹¹. This is called a 'Once-returner'."

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Non-returner (*anāgāmin*) is able to think, 'I have attained the Non-returner's reward', no?"

Subhūti replied, "No, World Honored One. And why? 'Non-returner' is the name for no further arrival, and really has no non-arrival. This is why he is called 'Non-returner'."

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Worthy (*arhat*) is able to think, 'I have attained the Worthy's enlightenment', no?"

Subhūti replied, "No, World Honored One. And why? Really, there is nothing called a 'Worthy'.¹²

"World Honored One, if a Worthy were to think, 'I have attained the Worthy's enlightenment', then it would be because of attachment to a self, a person, sentient beings, and a soul. World Honored One, the Buddha has said that I have attained the *samādhi* of non-dispute that among others is the best. It is the best because I am free of the desire to be a Worthy. I do not think, 'I am free of the desire to be a Worthy'. World Honored One, if I were to think, 'I have attained the Worthy's enlightenment', then the World Honored One would not have said that Subhūti is a happy woodland practitioner¹³, because Subhūti really practices nowhere. And so he is called 'Subhūti, the happy woodland practitioner'."

10.

The Buddha addressed Subhūti, saying, "What do you think? When the Tathāgata

¹¹ I.e., one more arrival in Saṃsāra.

¹² These are the four levels of spiritual attainment found in the early Buddhist Sūtras, such as those of the modern Theravāda canon.

¹³ 'Happy woodland practitioner' is another name for an ascetic, as asceticism often involves taking up residences in the wilderness away from cities and people for extended meditation retreats.

was formerly staying with the Buddha Dīpaṃkara¹⁴, he had attained the Dharma that that Buddha possessed, no?"

"No, World Honored One. When the Tathāgata was staying with the Buddha Dīpaṃkara, really he did not attain that Dharma."

"Subhūti, what do you think? The *bodhisattvas* adorn the Buddha lands, no?"¹⁵

"No, World Honored One. And why? The adorning of the Buddha lands is not an adornment. It is called an 'adornment'."

"This is why, Subhūti, the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* should thus give rise to the pure mind. He should not dwell in forms when giving rise to that mind; nor should he dwell in sounds, odors, tastes, tactile sensations, or ideas when giving rise to that mind. They should dwell in no abode when giving rise to that mind."

"Subhūti, it is just like a person whose body is like Mount Sumeru. What do you think? This body would be great, no?"

Subhūti replied, "Very great, World Honored One. And why? The Buddha has said that it is not a body that is called a great body."

11.

"Subhūti, suppose there were Ganges rivers equal in numbers to that of all the sands in the Ganges river. What do you think? The sands of all those Ganges Rivers would be many, no?"

"Very many, World Honored One. Merely all of those Ganges Rivers would be so many as to be countless. How much more so would be their sands?"

"Subhūti, I now will truthfully tell you, if there were good sons and good daughters, who themselves number like the sands of those Ganges Rivers and who filled the trichiliocosm with the seven treasures for the purpose of charity, they would attain many merits, no?"

Subhūti replied, "Very many, World Honored One."

The Buddha addressed Subhūti, "If a good son or good daughter receive and uphold just four lines of verse from within this Sūtra and for explain it another person, their blessed virtue would surpass the blessed virtue of the others'."

12.

"Furthermore, Subhūti, where what is said in this Sūtra is followed, even if it is just four lines of verse, it should be known that the gods, men, or *asuras* in all the worlds, should give offerings of support to that place as though it were a Buddhist pagoda or temple. How much more so if there is someone who is able to receive, keep, read, and recite it in its entirety? Subhūti, it should be known that this person consummate the

¹⁴ Gautama's encounter with the Buddha Dīpaṃkara, who gave him prediction of his future birth as a Buddha, is one of the major milestones found in the Jataka literature that purports to present stories from selected past lives of the Buddha as a *bodhisattva*. This literature actually predated the Mahāyāna movement and was the inspiration for the *bodhisattva* vehicle.

¹⁵ I.e., the *bodhisattvas* purify the Buddha land with their pure deeds that benefit sentient beings and improve the environment in general.

supreme, best, most extraordinary Dharma. If this Sūtra resides in his abode, then it would be as though the Buddha were present there, if it is honored by the disciples."

13.

At that time, Subhūti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, what shall be the name of this Sūtra? How are we to transmit and uphold it?"

The Buddha addressed Subhūti, "This Sūtra's name is the *Diamond [Cutting] Perfection of Wisdom*¹⁶. With the words of this title, you should transmit and uphold it. And why is that? Subhūti, the Buddha says that it is the perfection of wisdom (*prajāpāramitā*), so it is not the perfection of wisdom.

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Tathāgata has an exposition of the Dharma, no?"

Subhūti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Tathāgata has no exposition."

"Subhūti, what do you think? The atoms of the trichiliocosm are many, no?"

Subhūti replied, "Very many, World Honored One."

"Subhūti, the Tathāgata has said that atoms are not atoms. They are called 'atoms'. The Tathāgata has explained that the worlds are not worlds. They are called 'worlds'. Subhūti, what do you think? One can see the Tathāgata by the thirty-two signs, no?"

"No, World Honored One. One cannot see of the Tathāgata by the thirty-two signs. And why? The Tathāgata has explained that the thirty-two signs are not signs. They are called the 'thirty-two signs'."

"Subhūti, suppose there are good sons and good daughters that give charity and whose lives are equal to the sands of the Ganges River. And suppose again there is a person who receives and keeps four lines of verse from within this Sūtra and explains it for another person. His merit would be much more."

14.

At that time Subhūti, having heard this Sūtra expounded, deeply understood its meaning suddenly. He wept and lamented, and then addressed the Buddha, saying, "It is extraordinary, World Honored One, that the Buddha expounds such a profound Sūtra as this. Since the time I have had the wisdom-eye, I have never before heard such a Sūtra. World Honored One, if again there is a person who hears this Sūtra with a faithful mind that is pure, then in them will arise the sign of the real. It should be known that this person will have consummated the best, most extraordinary virtue. World Honored One, this sign of the real then is the a non-sign. This is why the Tathāgata has said that it is called the 'sign of the real'. World Honored One, thus having heard this Sūtra and faithfully understood it, receiving and upholding it is no longer difficult for me. If the sentient beings who come into the world in the last five hundred year era hear this Sūtra with faithful understanding, receive and uphold it, they then would be made most extraordinary. And why? These people would not have the images of a self, images of a person, images of sentient beings, or images of a soul. And why is that? The images of the self then are non-signs. The images of a person, images of sentient beings, and

¹⁶ Kumārajīva translated the title '*Vajracchedikā-prajāpāramitā Sātra*' as simply '*Vajra-prajāpāramitā Sātra*'. I have adjusted his rendering for accuracy.

images of a soul then are non-signs. And why? Being free of all images therefore is what is called a Buddha."

The Buddha addressed Subhūti, saying, "So it is, so it is. If again there is a person who hears this Sūtra, and is not astonished, not alarmed, and not fearful; it should be known that this person would be most extraordinary. And why? Subhūti, the Tathāgata's exposition of the first perfection is not the first perfection¹⁷. It is called the first perfection. Subhūti, the perfection of tolerance (*kūṇṭhi-pāramitā*), that Tathāgata has explained, is not the perfection of tolerance. And why? Subhūti, I had formerly had my body cut to pieces by King Kālīṅga and at that time was without the images of a self, without the images of a person, without the images of sentient beings, and without the images of a soul. And why? in that former time I had been cut apart limb from limb. If I had had the images of a self, images of a person, images of sentient beings, and the images of a soul, I would have become angry and indignant.

"Furthermore, Subhūti, I recall that in the past five hundred incarnations I had been an ascetic practicing tolerance. In that incarnation, I was without the image of a self, without the image of a person, without the image of sentient beings, and without the image of a soul. This is why, Subhūti, the *bodhisattva* should be free of all images when engendering the supremely unexcelled *bodhicitta*. He should not dwell in forms when giving rise to that mind. He should not dwell in sounds, odors, tastes, tactile sensations, or ideas when giving rise to that mind. He should dwell nowhere when giving rise to that mind. If in that mind he has an abode, then it would be the non-abode. This is why the Buddha has said that the *bodhisattva's* mind should not dwell in the forms of charity. Subhūti, the *bodhisattva* who bestows blessings on all the sentient beings should thus be charitable. The Tathāgata has said that all images then are the non-images. Further, he has said that all sentient beings, therefore, are not sentient beings. Subhūti, the Tathāgata speaks truly, really, thus, not with trickery, and no with contradiction. Subhūti, the Dharma that the Tathāgata has attained is neither true nor false. Subhūti, if a *bodhisattva's* mind dwells in the Dharma while practicing charity, it would be like a person entering darkness and who sees nothing. If a *bodhisattva's* mind does not dwell in the Dharma while practicing charity, it would be like a person who has eyes to see the sunlight that illuminates all the various forms. Subhūti, in the future era there will be good sons and good daughters able to receive, uphold, read, and recite what is in this Sūtra. For the Tathāgata fully knows and fully sees these people with the Buddha's wisdom. I can say that they all shall attain the consummation of that measureless and boundless virtue.

15.

"Subhūti, suppose there are good sons and good daughters who, in the morning, in numbers equaling that of the sands of the Ganges, give themselves in charity; who, in the afternoon, in numbers equaling that of the sands of the Ganges, give themselves in charity; who, in the evening, in numbers equaling that of the sands of the Ganges, give themselves in charity; and thus for measureless billions of aeons (*kalpas*) give themselves in charity. Suppose, again, that there is a person who hears this Sūtra with a faithful mind that is not contrary, his blessedness would overcome theirs. How much more so would it be if he copies, receives, upholds, reads, and recites it, and then

¹⁷ The first perfection is that of charity.

explains it for another person? Subhūti, essentially speaking, this Sūtra has a meaning that is inconceivable, inexpressible, and boundless in virtue. The Tathāgata expounds it for those of setting forth the great vehicle and expounds it for those setting forth the supreme vehicle. If there is a person who is able to receive, uphold, read, and recite this Sūtra and widely explain it to another person, the Tathāgata fully knows and fully sees that such a person will attain the consummation of an unfathomable, inexpressible, boundless, and inconceivable virtue. Thus such a person therefore carries on the Tathāgata's supremely unexcelled *bodhi*. And why? Subhūti, if there is satisfaction found in the lesser Dharma, that is an attachment to the image of a self, the image of a person, the image of sentient beings, and the image of a soul. Therefore, there could not be the ability to receive, uphold, recite, or explain it for another person what is in this Sūtra. Subhūti, wherever it resides, in whatever place, if therein is this Sūtra, the gods, humans, and *asuras* of all of the worlds should give offerings there. It should be known that this place then is a pagoda. All should pay respect to it by circumambulating and scattering flowers and incense around it.

16.

"Furthermore, Subhūti, if good sons and good daughters who receive, uphold, read, and recite this Sūtra should be slighted or insulted, they would have committed evil deeds in prior lives and as a result fallen into that unpleasant path. Because of that, they are slighted and insulted in the present life by others. When the prior life's evil deeds then have been extirpated, they shall attain the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*. Subhūti, I recall that in the past, a measureless *asaṁkhyā* aeons ago, before I was with the Buddha Dīpaṁkara, I had met eighty-four quintillions of Buddhas, had given offerings to all of them, and had received their work without needless error. Suppose, again, there is someone in the later superficial era who is able to receive, uphold, read, and recite this Sūtra, and attain the merit of it. The merit of my giving offerings to all of those Buddhas would not compare to a hundredth of his merit. Even a trillionth of his merit could not compare to it. Subhūti, if I were to fully enunciate the extent of the merit attained by that good son or good daughter in the later superficial era who shall receive, uphold, read, and recite this Sūtra, some of the people's minds in this audience would be confounded, become doubtful, and not believe it. Subhūti, it should be known that this Sūtra's meaning is inconceivable. The fruit of its reward is also inconceivable.

17.

At that time, Subhūti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, in what should good sons and good daughters dwell when engendering the supremely unexcelled *bodhicitta*? How should they subdue their minds?"¹⁸

The Buddha addressed Subhūti, saying, "Good sons and good daughters engendering the supremely unexcelled *bodhicitta* will give rise to this thought, 'I shall liberate all sentient beings. Having liberated all of the sentient beings, there are really no

¹⁸ At this point, the Sūtra repeats the topics found in section 2, etc. According to Conze, large sections of the Sanskrit version of the Sūtra is verbatim repetition of earlier sections. Kumārajīva seems to have dealt with this by glossing the repetitious material so that the latter sections would be more interesting to the Chinese reader.

sentient beings who are liberated.' And why? Subhūti, if a *bodhisattva* has the image of a self, the image of a person, the image of sentient beings, or the image of a soul, then he is not a *bodhisattva*. And why is that? Subhūti, really there is no one who has the supremely unexcelled *bodhicitta*. Subhūti, what do you think? When the Tathāgata was with the Buddha Dīpaṃkara, he possessed the Dharma and could attain the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*, no?"

"No, World Honored One. As I have understood the meaning of the Buddha's discourse, when the Buddha was with the Buddha Dīpaṃkara he did not possess the Dharma that could attain the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*."

The Buddha replied, "So it is, so it is. Subhūti, really there is no existent Dharma that the Tathāgata has attained in the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*. Subhūti, if there were a Dharma that the Tathāgata has attained in the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*, the Buddha Dīpaṃkara, then, would not have given me prediction, saying, 'You shall appear in a future life as a Buddha named Śākyamuni.' Since in reality there is no existent Dharma in the attainment of supremely unexcelled *bodhi*, the Buddha Dīpaṃkara bestowed onto me prediction, saying, 'You shall appear in a future life as a Buddha named Śākyamuni.' And why? 'Tathāgata' then is the thusness of things.¹⁹ Suppose there is a person who says the Tathāgata has attained the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*. Subhūti, really there is no Dharma in the Buddha's attainment of the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*. Subhūti, in the Tathāgata's attainment of the supremely unexcelled *bodhi* there is no truth or falsehood. This is why the Tathāgata says that all of the Dharmas are the Buddha's Dharma. Subhūti, that which is called 'all of the Dharmas,' then, is not all of the Dharmas. This is why it is called 'all of the Dharmas.' Subhūti, for example, take the person whose body is huge."

Subhūti replied, "World Honored One, the Tathāgata has said that the person who has a body which is huge, then, does not have a great body. It is called a great body."

"Subhūti, the *bodhisattva* is also so. If one should say, 'I shall liberate the measureless sentient beings' then he is not called a *bodhisattva*. And why? Subhūti, really there is nothing thing is called is '*bodhisattva*'. This is why the Buddha has said that all things are devoid of self, devoid of person, devoid of sentient beings, and devoid of a soul. Subhūti, if a *bodhisattva* were to say, 'I shall adorn the Buddha land'; he is not to be called a *bodhisattva*. And why? The Tathāgata has said that the adornment of the Buddha land, then, not an adornment. It is called 'adornment'. Subhūti, if a *bodhisattva* penetrates into the selflessness of things, the Tathāgata has said that he is genuinely called a *bodhisattva*."

18.

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Tathāgata possesses the flesh eye, no?"

"So it is, World Honored One. The Tathāgata possesses the flesh eye."

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Tathāgata possesses the heavenly eye, no?"

"So it is, World Honored One. The Tathāgata possesses the heavenly eye."

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Tathāgata possesses the wisdom eye, no?"

"So it is, World Honored One. The Tathāgata possesses the wisdom eye."

¹⁹ Kumārajīva's Chinese is not clear here. Hsuan-tsang's translation reads, "The term 'Tathāgata' then is the expression of the real, absolute, and superior." (T220.7.983c)

Bodhiruci's translation reads, "The term 'Tathāgata' then is the real and absolute." (T236.8.755b)

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Tathāgata possesses the Dharma eye, no?"

"So it is, World Honored One. The Tathāgata possesses the Dharma eye."

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Tathāgata possesses the Buddha eye, no?"

"So it is, World Honored One. The Tathāgata possesses the Buddha eye."

"Subhūti, what do you think? Regarding the sands possessed by the Ganges River, the Buddha has spoken of these sands, no?"

"So it is, World Honored One. The Tathāgata has spoken of these sands."

"Subhūti, what do you think? As there are sands in a single Ganges River, suppose there are Ganges Rivers equal in number to those sands, and that there are Buddha worlds numbering like those sands in each of those rivers. These worlds would be many, no?"

"Very many, World Honored One."

The Buddha addressed Subhūti, saying, "In those lands there are sentient beings possessing various kinds of minds, which the Tathāgata fully knows. And why? The Tathāgata has said that minds are not minds, and so are called 'minds'. And why is that? Subhūti, the past mind is unobtainable, the present mind is unobtainable, and the future mind is unobtainable."

19.

"Subhūti, what do you think? Suppose there is a person who filled the trichiliocosm with the seven treasures for the purpose of charity. This person, with these causes and conditions, would obtain many merits, no?"

"So it is, World Honored One. This person, with these causes and conditions, would obtain very many merits."

"Subhūti, if that blessed deed were real, the Tathāgata would not have said that this person would obtain many merits. Since the blessed deed is non-existent, the Tathāgata says that the person would obtain many merits."

20.

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Buddha can be seen by the perfect form of his body, no?"

"No, World Honored One. The Tathāgata should not be seen by the perfect form of his body. And why? The Tathāgata has said that the perfect form of his body is not a perfect form of body. It is called a perfect form of body."

"Subhūti, what do you think? The Tathāgata can be seen by the perfect signs, no?"

"No, World Honored One. The Tathāgata should not be seen by the perfect signs. And why? The Tathāgata has said that the signs' perfection is not perfect. It is called the signs' perfection."

21.

"Subhūti, do not say that the Tathāgata composes this thought, 'I shall have an exposition of the Dharma.' Do not compose that thought. And why? If a person says that the Tathāgata has an exposition of the Dharma, then they have slandered the Buddha because they are unable to understand the reason for my speaking. Subhūti,

the spoken Dharma lacks a Dharma which can be spoken. It is called a spoken Dharma."

At that time, the Venerable Subhūti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, isn't it doubtful that there will be sentient beings in future eras yet to come who will give rise to the faithful mind upon hearing of this Dharma?"

The Buddha replied, "Subhūti, they are not sentient beings, nor are they not sentient beings. And why? Subhūti, the 'sentient being' of a sentient being, the Tathāgata has said, is not a sentient being. It is called a sentient being."

22.

Subhūti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Buddha's attainment of the supremely unexcelled *bodhi* is the attainment of nothing?"

The Buddha replied, "So it is, so it is. Subhūti, in my supremely unexcelled *bodhi*, there is not the slightest thing that can be attained. This is called the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*."

23.

"Furthermore, Subhūti, the Dharma is equanimous, lacking high or low. This is called the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*. By having no self, having no person, having no sentient beings, and having no soul, and cultivating of all the good things, therefore, attains the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*. Subhūti, the words 'good things', the Tathāgata has said, are not good things. They are called good things.

24.

"Subhūti, suppose that a person has accumulated mounds like the Mount Sumerus of the trichilocosm of the seven treasures of such size and numbers as those Mount Sumerus for the purpose of charity. If a person receives, upholds, reads, and recites just four lines of verse in this Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra, and explains it for another person, the former's merit would not compare to a hundredth of his own. A trillionth part of his own, even, would be not be comparable to it.

25.

"Subhūti, what do you think? Would you say that the Tathāgata has this thought, 'I shall save the sentient beings'? Subhūti, he does not have that thought. And why? Really, there are no sentient beings for the Tathāgata to save. If there were sentient beings for the Tathāgata to save, the Tathāgata then would have a self, a person, sentient beings, and a soul. Subhūti, the Tathāgata has said that having a self then is not having a self. Yet, ordinary men take themselves as having a self.²⁰ Subhūti, the Tathāgata has explained that ordinary men, then, are not mortal men. They are called 'ordinary men'."

²⁰ Hsuan-tsang: "Yet, deluded men [see] different beings and are compelled to have this attachment [to a self]." (T220.7.756a)

26.

"Subhūti, what do you think? One can examine the Tathāgata by the thirty-two marks, no?"

Subhūti replied, "So it is, so it is. One examines the Tathāgata by the thirty-two marks."

The Buddha said, "Subhūti, if one examines the Tathāgata by the thirty-two marks, then a wheel-turning noble king is this Tathāgata."²¹

Subhūti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, as I understand the meaning of the Buddha's discourse, the Tathāgata should not be examined by the thirty-two signs."

At that time, the World Honored One proclaimed this verse (*gāthā*),

"If by form one looks for the Tathāgata
Or by the sound of the voice seeks me,
This person walks the wrong path
And is unable to see the Tathāgata.

27.

"Subhūti, suppose you were to compose this thought, 'It is not by the perfect signs that the Tathāgata has attained the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*'. Subhūti, do not compose that thought, 'It is not by the perfect signs that the Tathāgata has attained the supremely unexcelled *bodhi*'. Subhūti, suppose you were to compose this thought, 'Engendering the supremely unexcelled *bodhicitta* is said to be the Dharma of cessation'. Do not form that thought. And why? Engendering the supremely unexcelled *bodhicitta* cannot be said to be the Dharma of cessation.

28.

"Subhūti, suppose a *bodhisattva* filled worlds numbering like the sands of the Ganges River with the seven treasures for the purpose of charity. Suppose, again, there is a person who knows every thing is selfless and so attains the complete tolerance of them. This *bodhisattva* would overcome the former *bodhisattva*'s attainment of virtue. Subhūti, it is because *bodhisattvas* do not receive blessed virtue."

Subhūti addressed the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One, how is it *bodhisattvas* do not receive blessed virtue?"

"Subhūti, the *bodhisattva*'s performance of blessed deeds should not be subject to craving or attachment. This is why I say they do not receive blessed virtue.

29.

"Subhūti, if there is a person who says the Tathāgata comes, goes, sits, or lies down. This person does not understand the meaning of my discourse. And why? A 'Tathāgata' is without a place from whence to come and also is without a place to which to go. That is why he is called a Tathāgata."

²¹ I.e., the physical body of the Tathāgata.

30.

"Subhūti, suppose a good son or good daughter were to grind a trichiliocosm to atoms. What do you think? These atoms would be many, no?"

"Very many, World Honored One. And why? If these atoms were really existent, the Buddha then would not say the atoms are myriad. And why is that? The Buddha has said the atoms then are not atoms. These are called atoms. World Honored One, the Tathāgata has said that the trichiliocosm of worlds then is not worlds. These are called worlds. And why? If the worlds were really existent, then these would appear as a single entity. The Tathāgata has said that the appearance of a single entity is not the appearance of a single entity. This is called a single entity."²²

"Subhūti, the appearance of a single entity, then, is inexpressible.²³ Only ordinary men crave and are attached to their own doings.

31.

"Subhūti, suppose someone says the Buddha has spoken of a view of self, a view of a person, the view of sentient beings, or the view of a soul. Subhūti, what do you think? This person understands the meaning of my discourse, no?"

"No, World Honored One. This person would not understand the meaning of the Tathāgata's discourse. And why? The World Honored One has said the view of a self, the view of a person, the view of sentient beings, and the view of a soul; then, are not the views of a self, view of a person, view of sentient beings, and the view of a soul. These are called the view of a self, the view of a person, the view of sentient beings, and the view of a soul."

"Subhūti, in the supremely unexcelled *bodhi* all things thus should be known, thus be viewed, and thus be faithfully understood as the marks of the unarisen Dharma. Subhūti, the Tathāgata has said the words 'mark of the Dharma,' then, are not mark of the Dharma. This is called the mark of the Dharma.

32.

"Subhūti, suppose there is a person who fills the measureless *asaṁkhyā* of worlds with the seven treasures for the purpose of charity. And suppose there is a good son or good daughter who engenders the *bodhicitta*, upholding just four lines of verse in this Sūtra; receiving, upholding, reading, reciting, and giving extensive explanations of it for others. That blessed virtue would overcome the other's. And how would they give extensive explanations for other people? By not taking up the images of the absolute, the unmoving. And why?

"All conditioned things
Are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows;
Like dew and also like lightning.
Thus should they be contemplated."

²² I.e., they are not single objects, but collections of components given the label 'world'.

²³ The unconditioned might be called a 'single entity' insofar as it is not composed of component parts; but then it has no characteristics to sense, so it is inexpressible.

Once the Buddha had expounded this Sūtra, the venerable Subhūti, the monks, nuns (*bhikṣuṣ*), laymen (*upāsakas*), and laywomen (*upāsikās*), and the gods, humans, and *asuras* in all the worlds who had heard the Buddha's discourse were all greatly elated. Faithfully did they accept and hand down the practice of the *Diamond Perfection of Wisdom Sātra*.